

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

May 29, 1961

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT:

Subject: Specific answers to your questions of May 29th relating to the USSR

First, on Berlin: At Tab A you will find some papers you asked for plus a general paper giving the State Department German desk views. The author, Hillenbrand, will be in Vienna, and is an able man. I'm asking him for better dope on the West German legal position.

I checked Walter Lippmann's view with him again and it can be summarized as follows:

1. Stand absolutely firm on our right of access to Berlin and point out the extreme danger of any interference with it.
2. Avoid any actual negotiation at Vienna and aim to defer such negotiations beyond the German elections in September.
3. Do not foreclose the possibility that in return for detailed written guarantees of access to Berlin, we for our part might offer a practical de facto acceptance of the East German Republic (perhaps by associating it in the guarantee of access.) Lippmann thinks that without recognizing the GDR in formal terms, we can yet find ways of meeting what he thinks may be the fundamental Soviet impulse -- a need for security in Eastern Europe and the fear of what the post-Adenauer Germany might be like.

You will see that the differences between the Achesonians and Lippman do not turn on the specific issue of standing fast to defend our access to Berlin. They turn rather on whether there is any legitimate Soviet interest to which we can give some reassurance. At one extreme are those who feel that the central Soviet purpose is to drive us out of Berlin and destroy the European Alliance as a

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consequence. On the other extreme are those who feel that if we think in terms of accommodation, we should be able to avoid a real crisis.

Secretary Rusk inclines to the harder view, while Thompson, as you know, believes we must explore the possibility of accommodation. But in practical terms, for Paris and Vienna, there may be no real difference between them. Rusk, for example, suggests that in talking with Khrushchev you may wish to begin by a strong statement on access to Berlin and go on to ask, as Thompson so often has in his conversations with Khrushchev, just what the Soviets really find so unsatisfactory, as a practical matter, in the present situation. There is a chance that you might draw him into some clearer statement of their purposes here. It's not a very good chance, though, because he will probably be cautious in tipping his hand, just as you must be.

My own summary is first that firmness on allied access to Berlin is indeed fundamental, and second that a willingness to hear the Soviet argument on other points will not be harmful. The one thing which must be avoided in both capitals is any conclusion that the United States is feeble on Berlin itself. What we might later be willing to consider with respect to such items as the Oder-Neisse line and a de facto acceptance of a divided Germany is matter for further discussion, and we ourselves might indeed have new proposals at a later time. (One which we like and Soviets do not is a free city of all Berlin, and it's not unfair to mention that in Vienna if you want.)

Second, on the possibility of scientific proposals, I attach at Tab B a new and much improved memorandum from Wiesner's office. They put a priority on four possible areas of cooperation -- two in space and two in nuclear physics. Your own proposals to Khrushchev should probably not go further than to express your own interest and to suggest the matter be discussed at experts' meetings arranged through Ambassador Thompson. The practical process of scientific cooperation can be very difficult even with friends, and you will not want to get your own prestige hooked to specific negotiations that could be made sticky at any time by the Soviets.

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At Tab C are some recent disagreeable Chinese Communist statements about the United States.

We do not have any good facts on the relationship between Albania, Russia and China, but we will have some tomorrow.

We are proceeding to seek assurances that a mission in Outer Mongolia would be acceptable. Very few other nations have missions -- a list is being obtained. France does not.

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